



Grace Weller, Chair  
Michael Walsh, Vice Chair  
Debra Odeh  
Elias Fares  
Todd Sullivan  
Vesna Maneva  
Stephen Harte  
R.J. Sheer - Associate

## CONSERVATION COMMISSION

**Minutes: Conservation Commission Meeting Date: March 27, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.**  
**Location: Pam Dukeman Community Room, 273 Washington Street, Westwood, MA**

### **7:30 p.m. Call to Order**

The Conservation Commission meeting of March 27, 2024 was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Pam Dukeman Community Room, 273 Washington Street, with the following members present: Grace Weller, Debra Odeh, Elias Fares, Todd Sullivan, Michael Walsh and Stephen Harte. Member Vesna Maneva and associate member R.J. Sheer are absent. Also present is Karon Skinner Catrone, Conservation Agent.

Ms. Weller, chairperson, announces this meeting is being recorded.

- Approval of minutes – November 8, 2023, February 28, 2024 and March 13, 2024  
Minutes will be discussed at the end of the meeting.

### **Public Hearings:**

#### **22 Westview Terrace – RDA – Doherty** – Continued from 3/13/24

Front Porch Addition

Ms. Catrone states the applicant has not properly notified the abutters and must be continued.

**Motion made by Mr. Harte, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, to continue the hearing for 22 Westview Terrace to April 17, 2024 at 7:00 pm at 50 Carby Street. Unanimous.**

#### **88 School Street – RDA – Parmelee**

Addition

The Commission opened the public hearing and reviewed copies of the Request for Determination of Applicability for 88 School Street, including the following:

1. WPA Form 1 – Request for Determination of Applicability submitted on March 6, 2024 by Debbie Anderson of 45 Willow Street Norwood, MA 02026;
2. Plan – “PLAN OF LAND SHOWING PROPOSED ADDITION 88 SCHOOL STREET WESTWOOD, MA”, dated 2/5/24 submitted by Toomey Land Surveying, LLC of 48 Summit Avenue, Walpole, MA 020813, including one (1) sheet;

Present is Debbie Anderson, Wetland Consultant, and Ed Williamson, Contractor, representing the owners of 88 School Street.

Ms. Anderson states we are requesting a Negative Determination to construct a second story addition over the existing garage. The footprint will be expanded 44 sq. ft. No trees are proposed to be removed. All work is more than 50 feet from the bank of the intermittent stream that exists on an adjacent property to the rear of the house.

Ms. Anderson states only the bank was flagged. A compost sock and construction fence will be installed.

**Motion made by Mr. Harte, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, to issue a Negative Determination #3 for 88 School Street. Unanimous.**

### **Update Rules and Regulations**

Discuss and vote on the adoption and/or amendment of various sets of Rules and Regulations of the Town of Westwood Conservation Commission, including the following:

**Regulations for the Management of Conservation Areas, including Dog-Walking Regulations on Conservation Lands;**

Ms. Weller reads the mission statement for the Dog-Walking Regulations on Conservation Lands and states this was voted on and approved at the June 14, 2023 and November 8, 2023 meetings. We are opening this up again due to issues with language in the posting.

Ms. Weller opens the meeting to public comment.

John Cummings of 4 Chickadee Lane states an employee of Westwood Media Center was filming around town. She was filming in Lowell Woods and someone started yelling at her because she was video taping in the woods. She was horrified. This was followed up by a phone call by someone stating "How dare you video tape in the woods". He walked his dog in Lowell Woods for years and it was the best experience. Is there another place dog walkers can go? Maybe we can find another location for this in town.

Joanne Hennessey of 186 Pleasant Valley Road states her husband was in a wheel chair and was able to enjoy Lowell Woods because it was flat. During the pandemic more dogs and more dog waste was on the trails. His wheel chair was running over the waste and tracking into the house so he was no longer able to enjoy the area. For this reason she supports these policies.

Patsey Lawrence of Fox Hill Village states she used to walk in Lowell Woods with her family when they were young. Dogs need to be leashed and their waste picked up. Please reaffirm your commitment to protect these woods to provide a safe and peaceful place for all to enjoy the Lowell Family commitment.

Amy Cartwell of 314 Grove Street states if you have your dog leashed it is easy to pick up after them. She has an issue only allowing two dogs per walker because the town allows residents to own more than two dogs. If dogs are leashed and waste picked up the number of dogs per walker should be increased.

Ralph Yaeger of 401 Sandy Valley Road states there is less than 5% of households in Westwood that own three dogs. HE would like to express his support of the dog walking rules which were approved in November These rules are keeping the woods safe from unleashed dogs. Unleashed and uncontrolled dogs present a safety hazard. The old rules were implemented decades ago. It is time for new rules for the safety of the citizens.

Kathy Hollis of 211 Forest Road states she is in support of the new rules but have concerns about the 2 dog limitation. We have a dog that is walked by a dog walker. The 2 dog limitation presents a problem for a small business. I am asking that the number of dogs per walker be increase to 3 or 4 dogs per walker.

Kate Wynne of 10 Cedar Hill Drive states she is not in support because this does not seem like a compromise for responsible dog owners. There has been a change in the atmosphere from other people, not dogs. I would like 30 minutes to walk my dog. She notes, also the number of residents has increased.

Andrew Moore of 86 Clapboardtree Street states we do not want the limit of dogs per walker and we do not want a sign instructing people to call the police. Everyone agrees people should clean up after their dogs. This is the only place in Westwood dogs can be walked off leash. This became an issue within the last year due to 1 or 2 walkers who wanted to drive commercial dog walkers out of Lowell Woods. There has only been one dog bite reported to the police. The real threat is invasive plants killing the trees. He states he received the emails and was told be CA Catrone that there were only 1 or 2 people that complained.

Kathy Kelleher of 24 Sherman's Way states she has 2 dogs that she walks in Lowell Woods. People pick up after each other and put their dogs on leash when others approach them. She has seen a community of dog lovers. It is sad that our one sanctuary will change.

Celest Goldkamp of 151 Briar Lane states she has not experienced these complaints. As soon as she sees someone she puts her dog on leash. There is no where else to go. I feel safe walking in Lowell Woods. Please do not take this away from us.

Kristin Styer of 100 Conant Road states regarding professional dog walkers, they probably have more control than others. She states they have gotten a bad rap. They are small business owners and this will cripple these small businesses.

Tucker Sullivan of 48 Wessex Drive states she was a member of Westwood Land Trust and she knows that the Lowell Family donated the land and they wanted the residents to use it. The Honeywell Family chose the land next to it. There are other places for people who are afraid of dogs to walk. She states she needs her professional dog walker.

Mike Volpe of 26 Delapa Circle states it sounds like the old rules were not being followed. he walks at Lowell Woods everyday and see dog waste being picked up. We should enforce the rules we had. In the 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan a survey was done. The number 4 request was an outdoor off leash dog walking facility. This was when off leash was allowed and at that time people wanted more of this. He asks that we go back to the rules we had and do a better job enforcing them.

Eileen Bride of 20 Whitney Avenue states there was a time in Westwood when dogs would just roam around unleashed. She had a dog that was hit by a car and killed. She really enjoyed going to Lowell Woods. There was a time when people just worked things out. If you have an issue you should be able to address it with the dog walker you have the issue with. This has been made into something bigger than it has to be.

Jeff Lawrence of 587 Gay Street hands out copies of 31 letters written in support of these rules. It is not the commission's responsibility to provide a facility for commercial dog walkers nor do they have to allow dogs at all. Dogs off leash damage the land. The Commission has done a great job adopting these polices, not once but twice. These people should go to the select board for a dog park. Do the right thing and exercise your stewardship for the benefit of current and future generations.

Natalie Lender of 2 Gay Farm Way states she moved here from Russia. She has a dog that works with mental health patients. She walks her in Lowell Woods to help with her anxiety. This is a great place for people. There are a lot of animals in Lowell Woods. Our dogs are part of the nature. There should be a place for people afraid of dogs and for people with dogs.

Alan McDonald of 674 Clapboardtree Street states he used to walk his dog at Hale but it seemed like no one there likes dogs. He started walking his dog at Lowell Woods and never had a complaint about his dog being off leash. When Hale closed for the summer walkers came to Lowell Woods. When he approach someone or an on leash dog he would put his dog on leash. A lot of people like to walk their dogs off leash. Maybe you could allow dogs off leash at certain times of the day. A dog off leash will never poop on the path.

Luke Legere of McGregor, Legere and Stevens, P. C., of 15 Court Square, Boston, MA 02108 states he is representing some of the residents of Westwood. He submitted a letter to the Commission last week.

The audience is very vocal in expressing they do not want Mr. Legere to speak.

Patrick Ahearn, town counsel, states Mr. Legere does not have to disclose who he is representing. It is at the Commission's discretion if they want to allow Mr. Legere to speak.

The Commission agrees to allow Mr. Legere to continue.

Mr. Legere states this is not a situation unique to Westwood. The regulations have been adopted twice now and are very good regulations. The Conservation Commission Act of 1957 established conservation commissions for the purpose of being stewards of the town owned conservation commission lands and to protect the resources. It is not a right to use Lowell Woods. It is a privilege. The Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions handbook discusses this. He is asking for reasonable and fair regulations that allow all residents to use the area equally.

Tom Provost of 510 Clapboardtree Street states he remembers when this land was given to Westwood. It wasn't given to the dogs of greater Boston, it was given to the people of Westwood.

Nigel Smith of 814 Gay Street states everyone is talking about the environment. There is a lot of trash out there. We should be focusing on other things.

Irene Brennan of 22 Winter Street states she is dependent on a dog walker. The idea of out of town commercial dog walkers coming to Lowell Woods to walk out of town dogs is not the case. They are walking dogs of Westwood residents. The limitation on the number of dogs per walker is not fair.

Bobbie Wells of 375 Gay Street states there are responsible dog owners. She is terrified of dogs. She states she has been attacked 3 time and bitten once by a responsible dog owner. The dog owner could not believe the dog bit me. Lowell Woods should be for everyone. When she asked dog owners to put their dog on a leash, some would do it but others would say no. She states she supports the leash law.

Susan Lowell of Oriel Road states she has owned a dog sitting business since 1981. 15 years ago she stopped going to Lowell Woods with her dogs because she was always battling with dogs off leash and walkers not picking up after their dogs. She is also a dog trainer and owns 6 dogs. She states it is frustrating that she has to make 3 trips to walk 6 dogs. She is frustrated with what is going on in Lowell Woods.

Ms. Weller states the Commission would like to deliberate now.

Mr. Walsh states I believe there is a compromise. There could be certain times of the day no leash is required. Maybe after 9:00 am a leash is required. He states he is a practicing attorney and he has 4 dog bite cases on his desk. None of the dog owners expected it.

Mr. Fares thanks the audience for their comments. He states he would like to keep 2 dogs per walker. Maybe someone with 3 or 4 dogs could get permission from the Commission to walk more than two dogs. He is 100% in favor of the leash requirement. He does not think Westwood police have the resources to go to Lowell Woods to enforce this.

Mr. Harte states he would like to thank everyone for their comments. He is a dog owner. He respects people who pick up after their dog because his dog likes to pick it up. When he goes to places that leashes are required, he finds far less waste. As a runner he has a lot of interaction with dogs. He states he has good balance but he is concerned about people who do not. It sounds like to select board may entertain a dog park but he doesn't think conservation land is a place for dogs off leash.

Ms. Odeh thanks everyone for coming out tonight and sharing your comments. She has read all the letters and email and watched the videos that were sent to the Commission. She feels the policy put in place is a compromise given all we have heard. She asks Lt. Sheehy if reports to the police department have slowed down since the rules were put in place.

Lt. Sheehy states reports regarding dog walkers do seem to have lessened.

Ms. Odeh states she is in favor of the policy.

Mr. Sullivan thanks everyone for coming. He states he has read all the emails. Personally, his wife was attacked by a dog so he is in support of these policies. The town should be able to carve out an area for off leash dogs.

Ms. Weller states she has listened to everything and read all the emails. The town is exploring options for a dog park or off leash area. She feels that would help. There are a lot of residents in Westwood. If there was a town owned parcel that could be designated as a dog park she would be in favor. At this time she is in favor of this policy and feels the Commission should maintain the requirement of leashes.

Mr. Harte states perhaps we can consider allowing 3 dogs per person.

Ms. Odeh states there are very few households that own 3 or more dogs. She feels more than 2 dogs would be difficult to control and feels 2 dogs is the right number.

Mr. Walsh states more than 4 dogs requires a kennel license. Maybe a time could be carved out that dogs could be walked unleashed.

Mr. Fares states he would like the number of dogs per walker to stay at 2. If a resident owns more than two dogs they can get permit from the Commission. He does not think conservation land is a place for unleashed dogs.

Mr. Sullivan states he is in favor of the policy as written.

Ms. Weller goes through each of the dog walking rules.

Ms. Odeh states there have been some questions regarding the permits.

Ms. Catrone states the permit will be ready tomorrow and available from the conservation office.

**Motion made by Mr. Harte, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, to approve the Dog-Walking Regulations for Westwood Conservation Land as discussed tonight with provisions through 3/27/24. The dog walking regulations will read as follows:**

### **Dog-Walking Regulations for Westwood Conservation Land**

Dog -Walking is allowed on properties in Westwood under the care, custody and control of the Conservation Commission, subject to these regulations. People using these properties for walking dogs shall do so in a manner that allows for the preservation of sensitive resource areas and positive visitor

experiences. Further, individuals must take necessary steps to protect wildlife, vegetation, and other visitors. The below rules must be followed on all Conservation Land properties:

**1. All Dogs shall be licensed, leashed and under control at all times.**

This requirement will be posted at trailheads on Conservation Lands.

**2. No Dog-Walkers shall walk more than two dogs at a time.**

No person, whether walking their own dog(s) or acting in the capacity of a Commercial Dog-Walker, shall walk more than two dogs at a time on Conservation Land.

**3. All Dog-Walkers shall clean-up after dogs.**

Dog waste shall be picked up by Dog-Walkers and removed from conservation properties or disposed of in designated onsite waste receptacles, where provided. There are no trash receptacles at most Conservation Land properties.

**4. All Dogs shall be kept on established paths at all times.**

Unleashed dogs disturb or kill birds and mammals and trample and/or damage vegetation.

**5. No Dog shall enter ponds, watercourses, or wetlands.**

Dog activity erodes banks and adds sediments to ponds, stream waters, and vernal pools, thereby degrading habitat for aquatic species.

**6. No Dog shall harass wildlife.**

Dogs and Dog-Walkers are welcome to enjoy strolling along designated paths throughout Conservation Lands, but only if they do so in a manner that does not disturb wildlife.

**7. Special Regulations for Commercial Dog-Walkers:**

- a. Any person engaged in the business of walking dogs shall be considered a "Commercial Dog-Walker".
- b. No Commercial Dog-Walker shall enter upon Conservation Land with any Dog(s) unless they first obtain written approval from the Westwood Conservation Agent in the form of a Commercial Dog-Walker Permit, which permit shall be valid for one (1) year from the date of issuance.
- c. A Commercial Dog-Walker Permit shall be granted upon satisfaction of the following conditions:
  - (i) The Commercial Dog-Walker agrees in writing to indemnify and hold harmless the Town of Westwood from any and all loss, liability, damage or cost incurred related to the Commercial Dog-Walker's activities or the activities of dogs under their care;
  - (ii) The Commercial Dog-Walker provides written evidence to the Westwood Conservation Agent of commercial general liability insurance coverage in limits established by the Town, naming the Town as an additional insured; and
  - (iii) The Commercial Dog-Walker is found by the Westwood Conservation Agent to be in good standing and to have not violated these regulations during the past twelve (12) months.

d. A valid Commercial Dog-Walker Permit shall be carried by the Commercial Dog-Walker and shall be presented upon request by the Town's Animal Control Officer, a Police Officer or the Westwood Conservation Agent.

8. Violators may be expelled from the Conservation Land property and prohibited from entering any Conservation Land properties for a period of twelve (12) months, and may be subject to additional penalties and/or fines in accordance with Town of Westwood General Bylaw Chapter 184.

**Ms. Weller, Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Odeh and Mr. Harte vote in favor of the Dog Walking Regulations for Westwood Conservation Land. Mr. Walsh and Mr. Fares vote against regulations.**

**Motion passes 4 to 2.**

**Motion made by Mr. Harte, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, to approve the installation of signs on Conservation land to read as follows:**

**Dog-Walking Rules on Conservation Land**

- **ALL** DOGS shall be licensed, leashed and under control at all times
- **NO** DOG-WALKERS shall walk more than **TWO** dogs at a time
- **ALL** DOG-WALKERS shall clean-up after dogs
- **ALL** DOGS shall be kept on established paths at all times
- **NO** DOGS shall enter ponds, watercourses, or wetlands
- **NO** DOGS shall harass wildlife

**Commercial Dog Walkers:**

(1) Agrees that he/she shall indemnify and hold harmless the Town of Westwood from any and all loss, liability, damage or cost incurred related to the Commercial Dog Walker's activities or the activities of dogs under his/her care; and (2) Provides written evidence to the Westwood Conservation Agent before entering Westwood Conservation property of commercial general liability insurance coverage in limits established by the Town, naming the Town as an additional insured.

**Ms. Weller, Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Odeh and Mr. Harte vote in favor. Mr. Walsh and Mr. Fares vote against. Motion passes 4 to 2.**

Ms. Loughnane, director of the Department of Economic Development asks for confirmation as to whether the language on the sign directing people to call the police will be removed.

Ms. Weller states the current sign directs residents to call the police to report violations. The police department has requested this be removed from the sign.

**Motion made by Ms. Odeh, seconded by Mr. Harte to reconsider the previous vote. Unanimous.**

Ms. Odeh asks why this line is being removed from the sign.

Jeff Silva, police chief, states it was his recommendation to remove the language on the sign instructing residents to call the police with violations because these regulations are germane to the conservation agent unless someone is injured.

Mr. Harte states the sign will remain the same with the exception of the language instructing residents to call the police. This was a recommendation of the police chief so he feels it makes sense to remove this from the sign.

Ms. Odeh states she heard comments from residents that this language escalates things. She states she has gotten the sense that things have calmed down and escalating things is not what we are trying to do. She is in favor of removal of this language.

Mr. Sullivan states he is in favor also.

**Motion made by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Mr. Harte, to approve the language on the signs originally installed on conservation lands with the removal of the language instructing residents to contact the police department and removal of the police department's phone number. Unanimous.**

### **Westwood Conservation Commission Guidelines on Tree and Plant Removal**

Ms. Weller states these guidelines have been discussed at two previous meetings.

**Motion made by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Mr. Sullivan to continue the Westwood Conservation Commission Guidelines on Tree and Plant Removal portion of the hearing to April 17, 2024 at 7:00 at 50 Carby Street. Unanimous.**

Patrick Ahearn, town counsel, states if the commission would like me to review these guidelines they can contact me.

### **Regulations for Local Wetlands Bylaw**

**Motion made by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Mr. Sullivan to continue the Regulations for Local Wetlands Bylaw portion of the hearing to April 17, 2024 at 7:00 at 50 Carby Street. Unanimous.**

### **Stormwater Management Regulations**

**Motion made by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Mr. Fares to continue the Stormwater Management Regulations portion of the hearing to April 17, 2024 at 7:00 at 50 Carby Street. Unanimous.**

### **Action items:**

**Approval of Minutes** – November 8, 2023, February 28, 2024 and March 13, 2024

**Motion made by Mr. Walsh to continue the approve of minutes for the 2/28/24 and 3/13/24 to April 17, 2024 at 7:00 pm at 50 Carby Street. Unanimous.**

Steve Olanoff of 52 Glandore Road is present and states he has not seen these guidelines for tree and plant removal before and asks which lands they apply to.

Ms. Weller states this has been continued to April 17, 2024 and will be discussed at that meeting.

### **Discussion Items:**

1. Commissioners' observations around town and next scheduled site visits
2. Update on significant projects and other topics not reasonably anticipated

Discussion Items were not discussed.

**Upcoming Meeting:** 4/17/24 – in person meeting,  
50 Carby Street, Westwood, MA

**Note:** Agenda items and order subject to change

**Motion made by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Ms. Odeh, to adjourn the meeting. Unanimous.**